

1 Samuel 1:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?

Analysis

Elkanah's questions reveal both genuine concern and incomplete understanding. His threefold inquiry addresses Hannah's tears, loss of appetite, and grieved heart. His final question, 'Am I not better to thee than ten sons?' shows tender affection but misses Hannah's deeper longing. Ten sons represented complete blessing (Ruth 4:15), so Elkanah claims his love should compensate fully. Yet human love, however genuine, cannot satisfy every longing. Only God can fill the deepest needs of the human heart, and sometimes He withholds lesser goods to drive us toward greater ones.

Historical Context

The rhetorical question format was common in ancient Near Eastern literature for expressing devotion. Elkanah's comparison to 'ten sons' uses the number of completeness to express the fullness of his love, similar to Ruth 4:15 where Ruth is praised as 'better than seven sons.'

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How can human love, though valuable, fail to satisfy our deepest spiritual longings?
2. What needs in your life can only be fulfilled by God rather than human relationships?

Interlinear Text

תִּבְכֵּי י	לָמָּה	חַנָּה	אִישׁ הָ	אֶלְקָנָה הָ	לָהּ	וַיֹּאמֶר
why weepest	to her Hannah	her husband	Elkanah	Then said		
H1058	H4100	H2584	H376	H511	H0	H559
יֵבַע	וְלָמָּה	תֹּאכַל י	לָא	וְלָמָּה		
grieved	thou and why eatest					
H3415	H4100	H398	H3808	H4100		
לָהּ	ט וְ	אֲנֹכִי	הֲלֹא	לִבִּי וְ		
am not I better	thou not and why is thy heart					
H2896	H595	H3808	H0	H3824		
בָּנִים:	מֵעֶשְׂרָה	לָהּ				
sons	to thee than ten					
H1121	H6235					

Additional Cross-References

Ruth 4:15 (Parallel theme): And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.

Isaiah 54:6 (Parallel theme): For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.

Job 6:14 (Parallel theme): To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty.

Psalms 43:4 (Parallel theme): Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.

John 20:13 (Parallel theme): And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

John 20:15 (Parallel theme): Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 (Parallel theme): Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.